

Non-Conformists

1670
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NO

SCHISMATICKS,

NO

REBELS.

OR,

A VINDICATION

OF THE

Present Practice

OF THE

NON-CONFORMISTS.

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Non-Confession

STANDARD

R. B. E. D. S.

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Practical Preaching

NON-CONFESSANTS

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Non-Conformists no Schismaticks, no Rebels, &c.

READER,

CONsidering how frequently *Non-Conformists* are charged, sometimes with Schism, sometimes with Contempt of Authority; I thought my self obliged to Apologize for them (seeing no body else doth), and that as succinctly as I can; it not being my design to write what ever *might* be said, but what *may* be said with brevity, and that from one Head of Arguments.

As far as I know the *Nonconformists*, I judg they would not for a World willingly and deliberately contract the guilt of either of those Sins; and I am apt to think, that they are more troubled that they lye under the charge of this Guilt, (though groundlesly) than many others that reproach them so much with it, would be, if they were really guilty.

To clear them from both at once, I lay down this Assertion:

That Separation from the Church of England (as the Case now stands) is the Nonconformists Duty; and if so, then it speaks them not guilty either of Schism or Rebellion.

I know, that as many in former days, so many *Nonconformists* now, will not own their *Nonconformity* as a *Separation*; Some would call it a *secession*; others, a *suspention of Communion for the present*; and but *quid verba cum facta videam*: How softly soever men would speak out of a tenderness to the Credit of our Church, it cannot be denied but the thing is in practise among us; and why should we be afraid of the Name, which is not always to be understood in a bad sense? There is *Separation a malo*, as well as a *bono*.

By the Church of *England* in the Assertion, I mean not the Pro-

Professing-People of the Nation in the general; but that part of them that owneth the Prelatical Discipline and Mode of Worship.

Separation may be understood with respect either to the subject matter of it, or the extent of it. In the first respect, *Separation* is twofold, as Communion with the Church is, viz. Either Internal, or External: First, Internal Communion, which is by Faith and Obedience to the Institutions and Commands of Christ: Now it is granted, that it can never be our duty to separate in this respect. But, secondly, there is an External Communion with the Church, which is maintained by complying with her Discipline and manner of Worship: Of this our Assertion is to be understood, that it is our duty to separate from External Communion with the Church of *England*.

2. *Separation* considered in the extent of it, is also twofold: First, Negative, when we only deny to hold External Communion with them. Secondly, Positive, when we erect and join with distinct Societies for Worship, wherein we may dispence and enjoy the Ordinances in a way distinct from the Worship of that Church from which we separate. Now the Proposition is to be understood of both these.

The Proposition, being thus explained, I prove thus:

They that cannot hold communion with the Church of *England* in all Ordinances, without sin, are bound in duty to separate from her. But *Nonconformists* cannot hold communion with the Church of *England* in all Ordinances, without sin: Therefore they are bound in duty to separate from her.

The first Proposition can stand upon its own Legs, it needs no proof: yet I prove it thus; Because we must not sin to hold communion with a true Church. The least Evil is not to be done for the obtaining of the greatest Good, as the Apostle tells us, *Rom. 3. 8*. We must not tell a Lye for the Glory of God; and the reason is very clear, Because there is more evil in the least sin we commit, than there is of good in the greatest good we can obtain by it.

Obj. But though they that cannot hold communion without sin, are bound to separate; yet why to separate as before is explained,

by erecting new Societies for a distinct Mode of Worship? Why is not a Negative Separation sufficient?

Sol. I answer: Because we are bound to celebrate all the Ordinances of Christ, the Word and Sacraments; and therefore if we cannot enjoy all the Ordinances of Christ, and particularly the Sacraments, in the Church of *England*, without sin, I must look out some other Religious Society, where I may enjoy them without sin; for I must not live without holding communion with the Church of Christ in the Sacraments, Baptism and the Lords Supper.

The second Proposition, viz. *That we cannot hold communion with the Church of England, without sin*; I prove thus: Because we cannot hold communion with it, without complying with those things that are unlawful, and Corruptions in her. And this is the very Argument by which the Church of *England* vindicates her Separation from the Church of *Rome*. If you ask me what these corruptions are? I shall (that I may not swell this Piece too big) instance only in the use of the Ceremonies, Surplice, Cross, and Kneeling. Alas, say some, that men should make a Rent in a true Church for such Trifles as these are! But who it is that makes the Rent in this case, you shall hear anon. Mean while, as for your calling them Trifles, let me tell you, We think no sin too little either to defile us, or damn us. Others say, This is nothing but humour and obstinacy, and a pretence to make Factions, else we could comply well enough. For that, I have no more to say, but that it is strange men should be so mad as to ruin themselves and Families, and run such hazzards as we do, out of Humour and Fancy. But what ever men say, we do really and sincerely profess, some of us, That we look upon them as unlawful: others of us, That we question the lawfulness of them; and so they are sinful to us. *Rom. 14. 23.* He that doubteth the lawfulness of them, is damned if he use them, as it's said there, *He that doubteth is damned if he eat*; that is, he is self-condemned, and committeth a damnable sin; for, *what is not of faith, is sin*: and to prove that this is not a meer Humour and Obstinacy, we appeal to the Searcher of Hearts in this matter, as willing to stand or fall at His great Day of judging the secrets of mens hearts, according to the truth of *our Profession*.

Obj. But what reason is there why you deny or question the lawfulness of these Ceremonies?

I answer thus: All those things that are not commanded by God, and have been Instruments of an Idolatrous Worship, are not to be used in the Worship of God; and such are these Ceremonies: therefore they ought not to be used. I say, things not commanded by God, to obviate that Objection, Must we not use the Bible, because the Papists use it, &c. ? We must put a difference between the Institutions of Christ, and the Devices of Men; things commanded by Natural or Positive Law, must not be taken away when abused, but other things must. Now these Ceremonies are not commanded by God (and I believe it will be said to some one day, *Who hath required these things at your hands?*), and they have been, and still are, Instruments in an Idolatrous Worship: therefore it is unlawful to use them.

That it is not lawful to use such things as have been Instruments in an Idolatrous Worship, I prove by Scripture, Lev. 18. 3. *After the doings of the Land of Egypt, and after the doings of the Land of Canaan shall ye not do, neither shall ye walk in their Ordinances.* Now, is not the use of these Ceremonies a doing after the doings of this Land when *Romish*, and a walking after their Ordinances? And Deut. 18. 9. *They must not do after the abominations of other Nations.* Now, not only such things as were made Idols, but such things as have been abused in their service, are an abomination. Deut. 7. 25. *The graven Images of their gods shall ye burn with fire; thou shalt not desire the Silver or Gold that is upon them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination to the Lord: Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thy House, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest and abhor it, for it is a cursed thing.*

Obj. But, did not *Joshua* bring the Silver and Gold into the Treasury of the Lords House, when he had taken *Jericho*, *Josh.* 6. 24

Sol. But they had expresse command for it, *verse 19.* Neither doth it appear that it was the Silver and Gold used in their Idolatrous Worship; nor doth it appear that the property of it was not first altered, by being melted in the fire, according to Gods command, *Numb. 31. 22.*

Another Text to the same purpose with the two fore-mentioned, is in the twelfth of *Deuteronomy*, and the four first Verses; from all which, as from many others, it is evident, that we must not do after the abominations of other Nations: Now, are not the Surplice, Cross, and Kneeling, Abominations among the Papists? And if they be, Doth not God say, We must not do after the Abominations of other Nations? In that *Deut. 18. 9.* God forbids his people a symbolizing with Idolaters, that is, to worship him after their manner; for that is to hold communion with those whom he hates: *What concord hath Christ with Belial? and what agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols?* 2 Cor. 6. 16. Truly very much, by the use of these things. It is considerable here what the Church of *England* saith in her Discourse about Ceremonies prefixt to the Liturgy, *viz.* "That the most weighty cause of the abolishment of certain Ceremonies, was "their abuse, partly through the Superstition of some, and "partly through the Avarice of others; that the Abuses "could not well be taken away, the things remaining still. "And afterwards, That those be taken away which were "most abused, and did burden mens Consciences without any "cause. Where she doth not deny but that these have been abused too; and I know not why she should say that any other Ceremonies had been more abused than these. And again, "That every Countrey should put away those "things which they perceive to be most abused. And why is not that Argument as cogent for laying these aside, as any else? For they have been as much abused, they have been superstitiously abused in the Church of *England's* Judgment: Now the Argument in hand saith, Therefore they ought to be laid aside.

A late Author hath quoted Bishop Jewel speaking thus to the Papists: *These Ceremonies* (saith he) *ye have so abused, that unless we will greatly offend, we cannot any longer retain them*; out of his *Def.* p. 1. c. 20. And Bishop Andrews saying, *Whatsoever is taken up at the injunction of man, when it is drawn to Superstition, comes under the compass of the brazen Serpent, and is to be abolished.* Sermon on Phil. 2. 20. p. 316. And why may not this be applied to these Ceremonies now in use, as well as to any else? For,

1. The Surplice is of man's invention, and hath been drawn to Superstition, or been superstitiously abused: It is an Idolatrous Instrument, being both used in, and appropriated to Idolatrous Worship, and therefore to be abolished; for Gods people must not imitate Idolaters, *Deut.* 12. 30.

Obj. But it is a decent Garment in it self, we use it on that account, and because it is apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God, by some notable signification.

Sol. As for its stirring up our dull minds to our duty, I think that as good an argument for a Crucifix, as a Surplice; neither is it a Teacher of Gods sending, and therefore ought to be silenced. As touching its decency, I say, that the fore-cited texts plainly shew, that God will not account an Whorish Garment a becoming-dress for his Spouse, or any part of her: as white as that *Roman* Ephod is, it hath been, and still is, defiled with Idolatrous hands, and therefore ought not to be used by any of the true Worshippers of Christ, who are utterly to detest Idolatrous Abominations, and not to touch any of the accursed thing, lest it be to them as *Gideon's* Ephod was to him and his Family, a snare to them, and the ruin of them.

Obj. But if this Argument be good, then we must not wear Doublet and Breeches, because Idolaters do in their Worship.

Sol. They are not superstitious in the use of them: these are not accounted by themselves holy Garments, being not appropriated to Idolatrous Worship, but used at other times, and in other places; and when they are employed in other matters; and therefore cannot be called Idolatrous Garments.

Obj.

obj. But why then do you make use of Churches and Chapels? for many of them have been abused in Idolatrous Worship.

sol. If the Argument should shake these great Buildings, it would not prove it one whit the weaker. But I say this in answer: We must distinguish between these places as they are Fabricks convenient for publick Worship, such as we cannot well be without, and these places as dress'd up with their Idolatrous Ornaments, their Crosses and Crucifixes, Pictures and Images, &c. Now under the later consideration I will not plead for them, they must have another Advocate; but consider them as convenient places, stript of their Idolatrous Dress, and then this Argument toucheth them not: for, the reason why God will have Idolatrous Utensils laid aside, is, as he saith himself, lest they be a snare to us; which these places so stript, are not: now where the Reason of a Command ceaseth, there the Command it self ceaseth, expires, binds not.

2. The Cross is not only idolatrously used, but seems to be the very Standard of Idolatry; nay, it is made a very Idol, by their attempts to sanctifie other things, and preserve themselves from evil, &c. by the bare use of it.

obj. But the Cross was used by the Church of God before Rome became an Idolatrous Church.

sol. So was the Brazen Serpent used by the Israelites before idolatrously abused; and might still have been useful to keep alive the memory of Gods Mercy; yet when idolatrously abused, it must be destroyed. And so were High-places and Groves used by the Patriarchs, that were unlawful afterwards because of abuse.

obj. Your Arguments prove the same Surplice and the same Cross to be unlawful; but may we not use others, though not the same that the Papists use?

sol. The forementioned Scriptures tell you, That God will not be worshipped after the same manner: And did not King Abaz sin in using an Altar made like that at *Damascus*, though he did not use the same? And when God tells his people, they should not wear a Garment of Linsey-woolsey (because the

Idolaters did so), do you think he meant the same, or one like it? And when you say, the Cross was in use before *Rome* became idolatrous, do you mean this Cross *identitate numerica*, or *specifica*? Do you mean the same crossing *numerically*, or *the same for Kind*?

3. *Kneeling* at the Sacrament is used as an Instrument in Idolatrous Worship, *viz.* in the adoration of the Host, or worshipping of the consecrated Bread; and therefore is not to be used by us.

Obj. But it is a reverent posture, and we cannot be too reverent at such an Ordinance.

Sol. But this doth not answer the Argument for laying it aside; neither doth it follow thence, that it must therefore be used because it's a reverent posture; for then, why do we not receive the Word kneeling, seeing we cannot be too reverent at that Ordinance?

Obj. But to bow the knee in Worship, is suggested by the Light of Nature.

Sol. Bowing the knee in Prayer, is; but bowing the knee at the Lords Supper, is not; that being a Table-Ordinance, I think a Table-posture is most proper then. However, kneeling at the Supper not being of Divine Institution, and having been abused in Idolatrous Worship, is not to be used, it being a symbolizing with them in their Worship, after whose manner of Worship, we must not worship God, but must keep his Worship pure, who looks upon the mixing of Idolatrous Modes, Vestures, Gestures, Utensils, &c. with his Worship, as a polluting and defiling thereof, and is so stiled frequently in Scripture.

And if I might take upon me to censure many of the Church of *England*, I would say, They are mistaken in this; they think it their wisdom to keep as near the Church of *Rome* as they can, that they may win them over to themselves; whereas it seems to me to be the Mind of God, that we should flye as far off from them in our Worship, as lawfully we may, that we may not be ensnared back again to them: for when God would have his people purifie themselves from Idolatry, he requires them

them to abandon all the Instruments, Monuments, Incitements, Occasions of Idolatry, *Deut. 7. 25. & 12. 3. Destroy the Names of them out of that place*: So that whatever would preserve the memory of them, must be taken away. *Deut. 13. 12, 13, 17. compared*: In the two former Verses he requires them to *purifie themselves from Idolatry*; and in the 7th., he shews them how; *There shall not cleave any of the accursed thing to thine hand*: nay, *they must not keep the Coverings of Silver and Gold*, that the Idolaters used about their Images, *Isa. 30. 22.* Why, what harm would they do? Take away the abuse of them, declare you do not use them upon an idolatrous account, and you may keep them as Carpets or Hangings: No, saith God, you shall *cast them away, defile them*; that is, declare them polluted things, and destroy them: What this *defiling them* is, you may understand, if you consider how *Josiah* reformed the people from Idolatry, and defiled the Idolatrous Reliques, as its said *2 King. 23*, throughout the Chapter, especially the 8, and 11 Verses: *He took away the Horses that had been given to the Sun* (he left not an Hoor), and *burnt the Chariots of the Sun with fire*. But what need that? *Josiah* might have kept them for his own use, to ride in state in: No, he burnt them with fire, and all he is said to do according to the Law of God, *v. 15.* And it is here considerable what *Maimonides*, a Learned Jewish Writer, *Vossius*, *Selden*, &c. say, concerning many of the strange Ceremonial Laws that God enjoined the Jews; as, the *not rounding the corners of their Heads*, *not wearing a Garment of Linnen and Woollen*, and *not sowing of divers Seeds in the same Ground*, and *forbidding the eating of the Fruit of their Trees for the first three years after they came into the Land of Canaan*; with divers other Negative Precepts: The ground of these Precepts was, that they might not be like Idolatrous Nations in their Customs, not symbolize with them, but run counter to them: they should not sow divers Seeds in the same Ground, because Idolaters about them did so, &c.

Obj. But these Precepts are all out of the Law of *Moses*; but what is this to us?

Sol. 1. They concern us, and teach us how we should cleanse our

our selves from Idolatry, because the Old Testament is as well our Rule, as the New; *To the Law, and to the Testimony*, &c. Isa. 8. 20. And do not all our Authors, when they write against Idolatry, press these Precepts as obligatory to us?

2. The reason why God would not have his People symbolize with the Idolaters among whom they lived, was, (as himself saith) lest the practise of their Modes and Customs should be a snare to them: And why should not Idolatrous Modes and Ordinances be avoided by us now, lest they be a snare to us? for we are all prone to Idolatry, as well as they, as we are to every thing that is evil: And if the Reason of the Command concern us, the Command it self also concerns us, it not being repealed.

And thus much for the proof of our Assertion, That Separation from the Church of *England* is our duty, because we cannot hold communion with them in all the Ordinances of Christ, without compliance with their corruptions.

Obj. But there are some Church-of-England-men that will baptize without the Cross, and administer the Lords Supper to them that do not kneel.

Sol. To that I answer: What this or that particular Minister doth, out of design or favour to others, is nothing to our purpose; this is not the Church of *England*; she requires our compliance with them, neither is the Law satisfied without them.

There are divers other Reasons to be given, but for brevity sake I shall forbear to use any other, till I meet with an answer to this.

Now from this Assertion thus proved, I gather these two Corollaries that speak to our present case.

1. Then *Nonconformists* are not guilty of Schism, in separating from the Church of *England*: for if Separation be their duty, then it cannot be their sin; and this will further appear if you consider what Schism is: *Schism is a causeless Separation of one part of the Church from another, in external communion*: I say, a *causeless separation*; for there cannot be Schism in leaving their communion, unless we were obliged to continue in

it.

it. Now when a Church makes the owning of any corruption, the condition of our communion with her, we are not obliged to continue in it, but to separate from it: and herein I speak no other than what Protestants all edg to justify their separation from the Church of *Rome* (as our Antagonists well know); and therefore either they must clear themselves of these corruptions in Worship, or clear themselves from the guilt of imposing them, and requiring our compliance with them; otherwise our separation remains warrantable, and the guilt of Schism lieth heavy upon them, for making a breach in the Body of Christ, by requiring unnecessary and unlawful conditions of our communion, and so keeping us out from their external communion; for in this case we are not *fugitivi*, but *fugati*: and their crying out against us as Schismatics, is as if a man should thrust a Child out of doors, and then be angry at his departure, and punish him for it. Now who is guilty in this case of making the Rent in the Family, the man that turns his child out of doors, or the child that would have stay'd in, had he not been thrust out; or have come in, had he not been barred out? (for to require us to comply with these corruptions, that we may hold communion with them, is a Moral barr in our way) and if any ill consequence follow upon this Separation, some will find they have reason to say, Lord, what have I to answer for, that would not keep in, or take in these persons, but thrust them out, and kept them out, when I ought, and might have let them in!

Obj. But you own the Church of *England* to be a true Church of Christ; and if so, Christ is in it, and with it; and why will you leave that Church from which Christ is not withdrawn?

Sol. VVe acknowledg the Church of *England* a true Church, and that we are members of the same visible Church of Christ, together with them; and that we do hold internal communion with them: but its one thing to *leave a Church*, and another thing to *leave her external communion*; to *leave a Church*, is to disown it, and cease to be a member of it, or with it, by ceasing to have those requisites that constitute a member

of it, as Faith and Obedience, so *Chillingworth*. And thus we withdraw not from any Church of Christ; but to *leave external communion with a true Church* in her Discipline and VVorship, when she is in one or both of them corrupt, is to withdraw from her, wherein Christ withdraws, and when Christ would have me withdraw, as hath before been proved.

Ob. But who must be judg whether these be corruptions or no?

Sol. Every man is to be judg of his own actions, and will be so, while he hath that thing called *Conscience*: If other mens Determinations must bind up my thoughts, and Superiors have sovereignty over mens consciences in matters of Religion, what is that but a Lording it over mens Faith? If they require my consent to, or compliance with their Determinations, I must see by my own eyes, and not by theirs; I must be satisfied touching the lawfulness of the thing, else their Authority will be no excuse for my sin, in venturing upon that which I doubt the lawfulness of: *Hooker* spoke nobly, and like a man, when he said, *For men to be tied and led by Authority, as it were with a kind of captivity of judgment, and though there be reason to the contrary, not to listen to it, but follow like Beasts, the first in the Herd, this is brutish: Hooker Book 2. Sect. 7.* And for men to say, that Inferiors need not enquire into the thing that is commanded by their Superiors, but their Command is a sufficient warrant for obedience; and if the thing commanded be not right, they shall not be charged with sin that do it out of obedience to their Superiors. This favours too much of a design to cry up an implicate faith, that they may nurse up people in ignorance, like that of the Papists, that said, *Ab, were it not for that unluckie Luther, we might have persuaded the people of Germany to eat Hay.* For men to say their Superiors must be Judges only of their Impositions, and not themselves that are required to submit to them, is to say, that God would have us lay aside our Reason, which he hath given us for a Guide, and had rather that we should act ignorantly, than knowingly; and that God would have me put out my own eyes, to see by another mans: and I shall never be of his mind, who hath said lately in print, *If there be any*
sin

*fin in the Command, he that imposed it, shall answer for it, and not I, whose duty it is to obey; till he can prove, that another man may be punished for the irregularity of my action, and be damned for my sin, and yet I be innocent: I would desire these men to read 1 Thess. 5. 21. Prove all things, &c. and Gal. 6. 4. 5. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another; for every man shall bear his own burden: and Hos. 5. 11. therefore were the people of Israel oppressed, and broken in judgment, because they willingly walked after the commandment of their Rulers. We do not cease to be men, because we are Subjects: And Mark 7. 7. In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And 1 Cor. 7. 23. Be not ye the servants of men: Which we are, when we do what they command, merely because they command it, without enquiring into the lawfulness of the thing commanded. *Cum multis aliis, &c.**

Obj. But the Church of England doth not look upon them as corruptions; and why will you prefer your own private judgments before the judgment and authority of the Church?

Sol. My own private judgment is to me more than the judgment of all the men in the world; and if I act contrary to my own private judgment, to comply with the judgment of others, who can excuse me from sin, and save me from a Hell in my Conscience, because I have violated the authority of it? When all is done, my own judgment will be conclusive in the case; and if that say, This is black, I cannot think it to be white, what ever men would force me to do. *Chillingworth* saith, *Though a man should not oppose his own private judgment against the judgment of the Church, yet he may oppose his Reason, or the Authority of Scripture, against it, and then he doth not oppose his judgment to other men's, but the judgment of God to the judgment of men.*

Obj. But at this rate of discoursing, you take upon you to vindicate all Schismatics: Will not all Separatists clear themselves of the guilt of Schism, if it be enough to say, There are corruptions among you? And may not they be mistaken as well as the Church of England? For if she be not infallible, sure

sure they are not : and what therefore if they call those things corruptions in the Church, that are not so ?

1. To this I answer : First, It is not what men say, but how truly : A thief may cry Not guilty, as well as an honest man; but the question is, Whether as truly ? Every Separatist may perhaps say, in his own vindication, as *Peter* and *John* did, Acts 4. 19. *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge.* But the question is, Whether they plead it as warrantably ?

2. If any separate from external communion with a true Church, without sufficient cause, they are guilty of Schism, and must answer for making a rent in the Body of Christ.

3. I do not say, that every corruption in a true Church, is a sufficient ground of separation from it : the unsoundness of many in the Church of *Corinth*, touching the Doctrine of the Resurrection; and many in the Church of *Galatia*, touching the Doctrine of Circumcision, and the necessity of keeping the Ceremonial Law, were not a sufficient ground of separation from them; for the Apostles held communion with them notwithstanding these corruptions : and if one man's sin defileth another that communicates with him, who can assure himself any pure Scriptural communion on this side Heaven ?

But where the owning of any corruption in a true Church, is made the condition of my communion, and corruptions in Worship are made her prescribed devotion, there my separation is not only lawful, but a duty; and the Church itself is guilty of Schism, in making a rent within her self, and shutting me out, by putting such stumbling-blocks in my way, that I cannot get over to hold communion with her. Of this judgment is Mr. *Hales* in his Treatise of Schism, p. 8. and *Chillingworth* in his Answer, p. 16. and others that I could name of *Conformist* Writers : and therefore Mr. *Hales* concludes well, " That to load publick Forms with private Fancies, upon
" which men differ, is a most sovereign way to perpetuate
" Schism to the world's end.

4. If we be mistaken, in judging those things corruptions that are not so; yet seeing the things in debate are such, as the
Confor-

Conformists acknowledg to be indifferent in their own natures and that the Church hath a power to dispence with them, as well as others that she hath abrogated; whether is it not their duty to endeavour the removal of these also, in their proper places? And would not St. *Paul* have done so, that would not eat meat while the world stands, to the offence of his brother? Or would he have been for the continuance of them, to the grief and offence of his brother?

5. Whether are Swords and Prisons, rational Arguments to convince mens minds of the lawfulness of these things? Nay, is it not the way to teach men to act against the Light of their Consciences, and to debauch their Principles, till no Principles will hold them? As the Emperor *Constantius* said, *They that will not be true to God, will not be true to their Prince*. And whether is not enforcing a man to that which his Conscience tells him is a sin, like beating a man because he will not lay himself upon the Rack, or run his Head into a fiery Oven? And yet this is the way the Church of England takes.

Obj. But it is not the Church that takes this course; but the Civil Power, whose duty it is to preserve the peace of the Church.

Sol. 1. It is true, the Magistrate ought to take care to preserve the peace of the Church; but who ever said, that the peace of the Church could not be preserved without such a Discipline, and such Modes of Worship, as the Lord Jesus Christ never thought fit to appoint.

2. The Lawyer will tell you, *Quod quis per alium sunt, sunt per seipsum*: He that instigates another to do it, doth it himself: And therefore our Clergy-men are not clear in this matter; and how unworthily they deal with the Magistrates, that would cast the odium of such a business off from themselves, to the Magistrates, I leave them to consider: His Majesty having so often declared His easiness to tender Consciences, they must give us leave to conclude, That all the trouble we meet with on this account, is more to gratifie the Bishops importunity, than his Majesty's Inclinations. So much of the first Corollary.

2. *Corol.* If it be *Nonconformists* duty to separate from the Church of England, then in so doing they are not with

Contempt of Authority, indeed; *si satis est accusasse, quis erit innocens?* And, by the way, I cannot but take notice of the unkindness of the Church-of-England-men to their dissenting Brethren, that instead of being loath to burthen and offend their weak Brethren, as St. Paul was, they have made it their business to perswade the Authority of the Nation to enjoin that by a Law that their Christian Brethren scruple in Conscience: which puts me in mind of that wicked Policy of Julian, who (that he might avoid the imputation of Persecution, when he saw it was grown odious) erected the Heathenish Idols just by the Emperor's Statue, that while they refused to give Religious Honour to the one, they might be accused of denying Civil Respect to the other: Thus have they endeavoured to force us either into the displeasure of God, or of our Prince. We own obedience to the Magistrates Authority as a Christian's duty; but where there is no Authority, there can be no contempt of Authority: in an unwarrantable Command, there is no obliging Authority; and therefore to disobey that, can be no contempt of Authority. Suppose my natural Father command me, Never to hear the Word of God preached any more; if I disobey him in this, I disobey a man in a lawful Authority, but I do not disobey Authority, for he hath no Authority to command any such thing. We acknowledge it our duty to obey the Magistrate in all lawful things: but yet it must be considered,

1. That nothing is therefore lawful (I say, *economine*, therefore lawful), because a lawful Authority enjoins it; so that if Human Authority commandeth any thing forbidden by Divine Authority, then, *Whether obey God or Man, judge ye?* Mans Authority cannot supersede God's; so that if the thing commanded by man, be not lawful before he commands it, it is never the more lawful because he commands it; for Human Authority cannot alter the respects of Good and Evil; and therefore

2. Where that which is *indifferent in its own nature* (I mean *in specie*; for *non datur actus indifferens in individuo*; There is no particular individual action but is either good or evil,

but there are many things indifferent, if you consider them without the circumstances of *hic & nunc*, if you consider them not as to practice, but in their general nature): I say, where that which is thus indifferent in its own nature, loseth its indifferency as to practice, by reason of circumstances (that is, becomes unlawful to be done), that thing ought not to be imposed; and if it be commanded, that Command binds not to active obedience; and if it be disobeyed, there is no contempt of Authority, because there is no Authority in the case. So that to refuse compliance with those things that have been abused in Idolatrous Worship, though commanded by those that are in a lawful Authority, is no contempt of Authority; and if, because of the imposition of those things, it be the *Nonconformists* duty to erect new Societies for Worship, then it cannot be their sin to disobey those Commands that would null and break in pieces those Societies.

Obj. But there is contempt of Authority in your Ministers Preaching when they are forbid to preach, and that according to your own Principles; for you yourselves acknowledg, that the Supreme Magistrate hath Power, though not to null the *esse*, the *being*, yet to *restrain the exercise*, the *exercise of your Ministry*.

Sol. True, but it must be done upon a lawful account, a reason that Christ will approve of, for their being silenced: He hath commissioned them to preach the Gospel to every Creature, and commanded them that are in the Ministry, to wait upon their Ministry, to exercise the Ministerial Gifts that God hath given them; and tells them how they must do it, *viz.* as *Heralds* and *Criers*, *adversus*, that do not make Proclamation to two or three, but publickly to all. It's true, the Magistrate may deny them the use of those places, and the enjoyment of that Maintenance that is in his disposal; but this doth not dissolve the relation of Pastor and People, they are still bound to feed their Flock, they are acknowledged to be the true Messengers of Christ, having every thing that the Scripture requires as necessary to constitute a Minister of Christ; they deliver the true Message of Christ, they are not charged with any false Doctrine; and who hath authority to hinder the true Ambassadors of Christ from delivering the true Message of Christ, who have not forfeited their Ministry? If it be said, *But they have forfeited their Ministry by Nonconformity*: I answer, How can that be, if *Nonconformity* be their duty? How can they forfeit their Ministry by *Nonconformity* to that which Christ never commanded or allowed? But that is not my business to give you the reason of Ministers *Nonconformity*, but of the Ministers and Peoples present practice in separating from the Church of England in her external Communion: Which I have attempted this one way, not that I think there is no other, but I would not be too prolix.

To conclude: It may be some may think I might have used more keen Arguments; but I delight not to provoke: If I have said what may satisfy some, and stop the mouths of others that would reproach Religion with the present practice of *Nonconformists*, I have said enough to my purpose: And I must needs say, Though I have pleaded for a Separation, I am much grieved I have cause to do it; for the divisions of England, there are sad thoughts of heart. It is a sad omen to England, that the Devil hath set his Cloven-foot amongst us, and that we should deserve the Duke of Burgundy his Emblem, a Flint and a Steel smiting each other, and wasting each other, and yielding no other issue than Fire, I mean the Fire of Contention.

I heartily wish we may study the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel more, and that the Pomp of Worship may not eat out the Spirituality and Purity of Worship, which is then most pure, when most unmixt with man's inventions: and that we may not suffer so deeply for non-compliance with what God never enjoined; for our parts we desire to go out of the World without a scolding-conscience, that that may not lye in our faces for acting contrary to the dictates thereof. I have heard of a Noble-man of this Nation, who being in Prison for that which he called his Conscience, his Lady came to visit him, and asked him, *Why he would not do as others did, and then he might live at home in his stately Seat, enjoy the comfort of Relations, the plentiful Estate that God had given him.* To which he replied, *If I should wrong my Conscience to do so, how long do you think I should live with you?* Said his Lady, *I think you may live with us this twenty years:* Well, said he, *it is but twenty years then, but after that I must live to Eternity either in Weal or Wo.* It's good for us to consider, that we must live so here, that we may get well hence, and live happily when gone hence, and not be miserable hereafter, for counter-acting our Light here. The Lord put it into His Majesty's heart to consider, how many thousands are ruined of His Subjects, their Families broken, their Estates lost, their Trade spoiled, their Spirits discontented, their Persons imprisoned, because of these voluntary and unnecessary Impositions; and whether the good that is got by them, will recompence the mischief that is done by them; and what straits we are driven to, between the undoing of Body or Soul (for one of them must be ruined by these things), between a Prison and Hell, for we may speak in their language that said, *Parce, precor, Imperator, tu sacrerem ruinariis ille Gehennam:* Pardon us, Great Sir; You threaten us with a Prison if we do not do these things; but GOD threatens us with Hell if we do them. Sed

